Premium Crops

Leaders in Premium & Specialist Crops

LINSEED AGRONOMY CHANGES 2014

With the 2013 season firmly behind us it is pertinent to be looking forward to key Linseed agronomy changes for the 2014 season.

One of the key differences of course is the absence of a Neonicotinoid seed treatment. At first glance this could be seen as major disincentive for the growing of Linseed.

We would argue that in France up to 100,000 hectares/year of Flax/Linseed is grown and they have never had pesticide seed treatments (eg Chinook). Likewise, Premium Crops has had several Organic Linseed crops each year for the last three seasons and none of the growers have had a Flea Beetle problem.

By following the strategy below the risk of significant damage from flea beetle can be minimised.

Another major change will be the advice to use pre-emergent herbicides, not only to improve broad-leaf weed control but also to bolster the usefulness of Linseed as part of a black grass control strategy.

Finally we are talking to all growers/potential growers about the benefits of increased seed rates.

Strategy in Absence of Neonicotinoid Seed Treatment (Chinook)

Key points:

- Flea Beetle in Linseed is a different species (Flax Flea Beetle) to that found in Oilseed Rape and other brassicas.
- Flea Beetle have not been a problem in Linseed in recent years, possibly because:
  a) Linseed is now grown in a proper rotation with several years between crops*
  b) Flea Beetle damage is avoided by sowing in warm soils and good seedbeds.

Strategy:

- Plant crops when soils are warm (ie for rapid establishment)
- Plant crops into good seedbeds (ie not cloddy)
- Depth of drilling has a massive impact on speed of emergence – too deep and emergence is slow
- Evenness of drilling depth – we need even emergence, not staggered – an option is to drill at a lower speed
- Treat seed with Take Off (aids/speeds crop/root development)
- Roll after drilling (and before if necessary)
- Apply pyretheroid spray as soon as cotyledons visible
- Monitor regularly in case subsequent treatments required

** Years ago Flea Beetle became problematic when a huge subsidy and low price promoted continuous Linseed with little attention to husbandry*

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A New Approach to Linseed Herbicides

Because of the perpetual crop damage issues surrounding post emergence weed control in Linseed, we shall be recommending a pre-emergence approach for 2014. This will facilitate the use of extremely safe products allowing crops to express their potential more fully. Clean crops dry out more quickly, which in turn means easier harvesting, and in some cases the avoidance of unforeseen cleaning costs.

This approach when allied with the early maturing and higher yielding "***EasyCut*** " varieties and enhanced seed rates should improve the yield, timeliness and profitability of Linseed.

It also gives opportunities for robust control of herbicide resistant grass weeds and allows for a planned weed control approach so product can be on farm before the crop is drilled.

Broad Leaved Weed Control

Callisto

Callisto is superbly safe pre-emergence on Linseed, with a great Spring weed spectrum. Use up to 1.5 lt/ha for full control of broadleaved weeds and meadow grass.

We now have several seasons' worth of experience of using this product. Whilst not the cheapest option, it has done a fantastic job and reduces the need for high SU rates.

Herbicide Resistant Grass Weeds

Avadex Granules

15 kg/ha gives about 80% Blackgrass control when used immediately at sowing. When used after stale seedbed techniques, a pre-sowing burn down with Glyphosate and delayed sowing into warm seedbeds this is usually enough, although post-emergence options remain should a top up be required.

Seed Rates

It is not uncommon to hear comments from farmers and agronomists saying that their Linseed crops were "too thin – I think we need to increase our seed rate".

Over the last 20 years or so the standard seed rate for Linseed has been circa 650 seeds/m^2 with the aim of establishing 400 plants/m^2. This was based on ADAS trials results and on varieties prevalent at the time.

In practice, the establishment rates are often far lower than this, with 200 – 300 plants not uncommon and sometimes considerably less.

In ideal conditions this may not be a problem because Linseed compensates well, branching out to fill the gaps. However, if the crop is stressed in anyway (eg poor seed bed, herbicide damage etc) the crops will often remain thin and yield can be compromised.

As a very general rule of thumb, in mature crops if you can easily see the ground then they are too thin! To this end we are offering growers the option of increasing their seed rates to 800 seeds/m^2, with the aim of having thicker crops. Whilst this is no guarantee of a higher yield, it gives the crop the best possible chance to yield. Premium Crops are subsidising this extra seed so the additional cost to the farmer is marginal (typically £4.00/acre).

If you have concerns about the potential lodging risk of increased seed rates, be assured this approach is for the "***EasyCut*** " varieties only due to their shortness and resistance to lodging.

2014 Contract Terms

Contract covers full produce of the area sown (no need to fix a tonnage and no risk of default)

Option 1 - Fixed £400.00/tonne

Option 2 - 50% of the produce at a fixed £400.00/tonne
- 50% of the produce at a £70.00/tonne premium over the Oilseed Rape price at delivery

(The ex-farm Rape price is calculated by taking the average delivered price for Rape for England published by HGCA for month prior to movement, less £15.00/tonne to convert to an ex farm basis. Maximum contract price £450.00/tonne ex farm.)

Movement - September/October
- £1.50/month storage premium from November onwards

No capped load charges (unless taken to store for drying/cleaning)

Relaxed quality specifications:

- Moisture - Maximum 10% (normally basis 9%, with claims to 10%)
- Admixture - Maximum 5% (normally basis 2% with claims to 4% and rejection over 4%)
- Oil Content - Min 38% oil, min 54% ALA